



REASON & REVELATION

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

JULY 2001

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Alden Bass, Joe Deweese, Kyle Butt, and Bert Thompson

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In the December 2000 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, we published articles by two extremely talented young men—Alden Bass and Joe Deweese—who had served as our summer interns during June, July, and August of that year. Since then, as they have had opportunity, both of them have continued to work with us to produce additional research material. It is a pleasure to be able to share with our readers once again the fruits of their labors. I have no doubt that you will be impressed with, and benefit from, their articles in this issue. More is yet to come from their pens in future issues of *R&R*, I assure you.]

Q [1] In Galatians 3:17, the apostle Paul stated that the Law of Moses (which was given shortly after the Israelites' exit from Egypt) came **430 years after God had made His covenant with Abraham**. However, Moses stated in Exodus 12:40-41 that the children of Israel **dwelt in Egypt 430 years**. How can both passages be correct when it seems clear from a straightforward reading of biblical chronology that a minimum of 215 years passed between the time God made His covenant with Abraham and the time the Israelites (through Jacob) entered Egypt—thus making it appear that it was **645 years** ($215 + 430$) from the promises to Abraham to the giving of the Law?

[2] Additionally, information in 1 Chronicles 6:1, 1 Chronicles 23:6-13, and Exodus 6:16-20 allows for a maximum time period of 352 years. How, then, can it be stated that the Israelites were in Egypt **430 years**?

[3] Furthermore, in Genesis 15:13 Moses explained that the Israelites would be "so-

journers in a land that is not theirs" for "400 years," and Stephen used the same figure in his speech in Acts 7:6 when he said that the Israelites would be brought "into bondage" and treated evil "for 400 years." What is the truth of the matter? How, exactly, do all these passages fit together? How many years **were** the children of Israel in Egypt?

A The Exodus of the Hebrews from the hands of their cruel Egyptian taskmasters is one of the most triumphant stories in Old Testament history. This event was the beginning of Israel's rise to power, and proved to the then-known world that the living God had chosen the descendants of Abraham as the people through whom He would bring the Messiah. The Exodus and its aftermath were so monumental, in fact, that it virtually overshadowed the history of the previous centuries.

But the exact length of the Israelites' "sojourn" has been in the past, and remains today, a matter of some controversy. Certain biblical passages (e.g., Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6) seem to indicate a length of 400 years for the time period under consideration. Elsewhere (e.g., Exodus 12:40-41) the length of time appears to be 430 years. Still other information (e.g., 1 Chronicles 6:1, 1 Chronicles 23:6-13, and Exodus 6:16-20) places an upper limit of approximately 350 years on the time frame involved. In an article written more than thirty years ago ("The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage"), chronologist Harold W. Hoehner observed: "When

one looks at the various passages of Scripture concerning the length of Israel's bondage in Egypt, one immediately discovers that there are apparent disagreements in the biblical record" (1969, 126:306). In his discussion on Exodus 12:40-41, renowned commentator Adam Clarke noted: "The statement in this verse is allowed on all hands to be extremely difficult, and therefore the passage stands in especial need of illustration" (n.d., p. 358). Albert Barnes took the same position in regard to Acts 7:6 when he wrote in his commentary on that book: "Great perplexity has been experienced in explaining this passage, or reconciling it with other statements" (1949a, p. 121). Those "other statements" to which Barnes referred are the passages mentioned in the above questions. Can the "apparent disagreements" between these passages be resolved?

Yes, they can. However, some background information on each of these passages is required in order to understand the problems posed by the three questions above—and the solutions that we plan to propose.

First, we need to address the suggestion that there was a minimum of 215 years between God's promise to Abraham and the entrance of the Israelites (through Jacob) into Egypt. Such a suggestion is correct. Various writers (e.g.: Barnes, 1949b, p. 343; Duncan, n.d., p. 4; Hoehner, 1969, 126:308-309; Mauro, n.d., pp. 26-27) have explained how the 215-year figure can be obtained quite readily from Scripture. By way of summary, the information appears as follows:



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Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2001. All rights reserved.

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Annual Subscription Rates:

\$ 8.00 Domestic
\$13.00 Canada & Overseas Airmail

Mailing Address:

Apologetics Press, Inc.
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

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Fax: (334) 270-2002

Orders:

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EVENT	VERSE(S)	YEARS
The call of Abraham at 75 years of age	Genesis 12:4-7	0
Isaac born when Abraham was 100 years old	Genesis 21:5	add 25
Sixty years later, Jacob was born	Genesis 25:26	add 60
Jacob was 130 years old when he entered Egypt	Genesis 47:9,28	add 130
	TOTAL	215

Later in this discussion, we will return to the problem of the alleged 430 years of Egyptian bondage supposedly having to be added to that 215-year period. But for the present, we would like to examine the problem of the limitation placed on the Egyptian sojourn by information found in such passages as 1 Chronicles 6:1, 1 Chronicles 23:6-13, and Exodus 6:16-20. Again, by way of summary, the information gleaned from these texts is as follows:

1. The text in Genesis 46:11 indicates that Kohath, the son of Levi and grandfather of Moses, apparently was born prior to Jacob moving to Egypt with his sons (Genesis 46:11). If he had **just been born** at the time, and if he sired his son Amram the **last day** of his life, then Amram could have been born no later than 134 years after the entrance into Egypt (rounding a 9-month pregnancy upward to a full year) because Kohath lived only 133 years (Exodus 6:18).

2. Amram (the father of Moses) lived 137 years (Exodus 6:20). If he had sired Moses the **last day** of his life, then Moses would have been born no more than 272 years after Jacob and his sons entered Egypt ($133 + 1 + 137 + 1 = 272$).

3. Moses was 80 years old when Israel came out of Egypt (Exodus 7:7).

4. Add that 80 to the 272, and the total is a maximum of 352 years. As Barnes noted:

From the account which Moses has given of the lives of certain persons, it would seem clear that...the **whole** time thus mentioned, including the time in which the father lived **after** his son, was only three hundred and fifty years (1949a, p. 121, emp. in orig.).

Thus the suggestion that these passages “allow for a maximum time period of 352 years” also is correct.

5. Additional information that delimits the number of years of the sojourn can be derived from a source completely independent of Kohath—Moses’ mother, Jochebed. The Bible mentions her twice, the first instance being Exodus 6:20: “And Amram took him Jochebed his father’s sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty and seven years.” Jochebed is named a second time in Numbers 26:59: “And the name of Amram’s wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister.”

Clearly, Jochebed (who was born in Egypt) was the daughter of Levi, the sister of Kohath. With this information before us, let’s “crunch the numbers.” Eleven of Jacob’s sons were born within a seven-year period. Remember that as a bachelor, Jacob worked seven years for Laban in order to “pay” for Rachel, but was tricked by Laban into marrying Leah. Then, he worked for seven more years in order to marry Rachel. At the end of this second seven years, he asked to depart from Laban with all of the children who had been born to him and his wives (Genesis 30:25). With Levi being the third son of Jacob/Leah (allowing approximately one year for the births of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi), he could have been only about four years older than Joseph, who was born near the end of the seven-year period. As Joseph was 39 when Jacob came into Egypt (he was 30 when he appeared before Pharaoh [Genesis 41:46], plus seven years of plenty, plus one more year before the famine was realized), Levi could not have been more than 44 or 45 when he came into Egypt. Levi lived in Egypt for 93 years (age at his death was 137 [Exodus 6:16], minus 44 [his age when he went into Egypt], which equals 93). If Levi had conceived Jochebed **on the very last day of his life**, then **Jochebed would have had to given birth to Moses when she was 257 years old** in order to get a period of 430 years for the sojourn in Egypt (93 years that Levi lived in Egypt, plus Moses’ 80 years (Exodus 7:7) when he arrived to deliver the children of Israel— $93+80+257=430$). Recalling the fact that Sarah was only 90 when the miraculous birth of Isaac occurred, it makes little sense to suggest that Jochebed gave birth to Moses when she was almost three times as old as Sarah!



Furthermore, we know that life spans were far shorter than 257 by this time, and that the 430-year sojourn does not (and cannot) fit with the genealogies—either through Kohath or through Jochebed.

Where, then, do the figures of 430 years and 400 years fit into all of this? Were the Israelites in Egypt 645 years? Or 430 years? Or 400 years? Or 215 years?

As we attempt to provide the answers to such questions, let us point out that **no one** has stepped forward to suggest that the Israelites were in Egypt for **645 years**. Such a view is indefensible in light of the biblical evidence, including (but not necessarily limited to) the scripturally imposed time limit mentioned above of 352 years. There are, however, two major viewpoints regarding the specific length of Israel's sojourn. The first suggests that the Israelites **actually lived in Egypt** for 430 years. This view has been adopted by Archer (1994, pp. 205-212), Keil and Delitzsch (1974, 2:29), Kitchen (1966, pp. 53-56), and Unger (1954, pp. 106, 150), among others. Yet, as David Rohl observed in his book, *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*:

In most commentaries or popular books on the Old Testament you will read that the Israelite Sojourn in the land of Egypt lasted four hundred and thirty years. However, this figure is by no means certain. In fact, there is clear evidence that the period of the Sojourn was no more than two hundred fifteen years (1995, p. 329).

Dr. Rohl is correct on both counts. The idea which suggests that the Israelites spent 430 years in Egypt is presented in “most commentaries or popular books on the Old Testament.” Nevertheless, there is “clear evidence” that the Israelites were in Egypt for only 215 years, not 430. [We will deal with the matter of the “400 years” of Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 at a later point in this article, since it turns out to be a separate issue altogether.] This, then, is the second major view regarding the length of the sojourn, and has been adopted by such scholars as Barnes (n.d., p. 121), Clarke (n.d., 1:358), Henry (n.d., 1:322), Mauro (n.d., pp. 31-32), Rohl (1995, pp. 329-332), and Thiele (1963, pp. 166-167), among others. But why—in light of what appear to be clear statements of Scripture that assign a period of 430 years to the sojourn—do such writers suggest that the sojourn actually was half of that? An explanation is in order.

There is only one passage in the Old Testament that suggests a sojourn of 430 years—Exodus 12:40-41:

Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was **four hundred and thirty years**. And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt.

Those who suggest that the sojourn lasted only 215 years believe—because numerous facts seem to demand it—that the time period of “the sojourning of the children of Israel” **begins with the call of Abraham** and God’s promise to him (Genesis 12:1-3), **and ends with the Exodus**. In other words, the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) sojourned in Canaan for 215 years, and their descendants lived in Egyptian bondage for an additional 215 years. The total, then, is the 430-year figure of Exodus 12:40-41 (and Galatians 3:17). In his commentary on Acts, Albert Barnes put it this way:

The question then is, how can these accounts be reconciled? The only satisfactory way is by supposing that the **four hundred and thirty years includes the whole time from the calling of Abraham to the departure from Egypt** (1949a, p. 121, emp. added).

In addressing the text of Acts 7:6 in his commentary on that inspired book, H. Leo Boles remarked: “Paul says that the law came four hundred thirty years after the promise (Gal. 3:17); so that **the four hundred years of Ex. 12:40 probably included the patriarchs’ residence in Canaan** (Genesis 15:13,14; Exodus 3:12)” [1941, p. 104, emp. added]. In his commentary on Galatians, Barnes wrote:

The exact time here referred to was probably when Abraham was called, and when the promise was first made to him. Assuming that as the time referred to, it is not difficult to make out the period of four hundred and thirty years (1949b, p. 343).

But why is it “not difficult”? And what do we mean by our statement that some scholars believe the sojourn lasted only 215 years because “numerous facts” seem to demand it? What are those “numerous facts”? How can the 215-year figure be defended?

First, it must be admitted forthrightly, in light of the information given above, that there is a **maximum** of 352 years available for the sojourn in Egypt, whatever that sojourn might encompass. There simply is no way around that fact.

Second, Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, reviewed the time element associated with the covenant between God and Abraham (given in Genesis 15) when he wrote:

Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, “And to seeds,” as of many; but as of one, “And to thy seed,” which is Christ. Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law—which came **four hundred and thirty years after**—doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect (3:16-17).

In discussing Paul’s observation, Philip Mauro wrote: “Here we see that the 430 years began with God’s promise to Abram, made at the time he entered into Canaan at the age of 75 (Gen. 12:1-4) and ended with the giving of the law, which was the same year as the Exodus” (n.d., p. 27). As we have shown above, it can be documented quite easily from Scripture that the time from Abraham’s call to Jacob’s entrance into Egypt was 215 years. Rohl therefore concluded:

Various passages in the book of Genesis have led scholars to determine that the period from Abraham’s descent to Jacob’s arrival in the Land of Goshen was two hundred and fifteen years and so the Sojourn in Egypt (from Jacob’s arrival to the Exodus) lasted around the same length of time—in other words, circa two hundred and fifteen years (1995, p. 331, parenthetical item in orig.).

If the time period between Abraham’s call and the giving of the law (which occurred roughly three months after the Exodus) was 430 years (and Paul specifically remarked that it was), and if 215 of those years had passed before the Israelites went into Egypt (the time period from Abraham’s call to Jacob’s entrance into the land of the Nile), then that would leave only 215 years remaining for the Israelites’ sojourn in Egypt—which is exactly the time frame we believe the evidence supports.

Third, in Genesis 15:16 it was prophesied that the Israelites would return to Palestine during the lifetime of the “fourth generation”—which they did, according to Exodus 6:16-20, Numbers 3:17-19, Numbers 26:57-59, 1 Chronicles 6:1-3, and 1 Chronicles 23:6,12-13 (Jacob-Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses). As Hoehner (who does not even agree with the 215-year view) admitted: “To fit four generations into a 215-year period is much more reasonable than a 430-year span” (1969, 126: 309; see also Duncan, n.d.).



Fourth, secular research likewise has concluded that the Israelites remained in the land of the pharaohs for 215 years. David Rohl, a respected Egyptologist, is convinced that this is the proper interpretation of the facts. In his book, *Pharaohs and Kings*, he undertook the challenge of reassessing the century-old Egyptian chronology so that it could accommodate more accurately several new archaeological discoveries. According to his research, Israel went down into Egypt c. 1662 B.C., and was delivered by God through Moses c. 1447 B.C.—a span of 215 years (1995, pp. 329–332).

Fifth, there are other important historical and/or textual considerations that need to be investigated in this matter. For example, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus wrote that the Israelites “left Egypt in the month of Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but **two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt**” (II. 15.2). Rohl observed in this regard:

Now, according to the statements of Josephus himself, he had access to very old documents formerly housed in the Temple of Jerusalem from which to draw his account of early Israelite history. Josephus lived in the first century A.D. and so his writings are dated hundreds of years before the Masoretic text of the Tanakh (Hebrew Old Testament) was completed in the fourth century A.D. If his source documents were genuine, then the information he gives for the duration of the Sojourn derives from a much earlier period than that employed by the Masoretes when they made their version of the history of Israel and a further several centuries before the earliest extant copy of the Masoretic text (1995, p. 331).

In the Masoretic text of the Old Testament (to which Rohl referred, and on which the biblical quotations given above have been based), Exodus 12:40 reads as follows: “The time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was **four hundred and thirty years**.” Two other highly reliable biblical texts, however, strongly suggest that this translation is incorrect due to a critical omission. In both the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), Exodus 12:40 reads as follows: “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel **and of**

their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan AND in the land of Egypt was 430 years” (see Clarke, n.d., pp. 358–359, emp. in orig.). William Whiston, who translated the works of Flavius Josephus into English, included a footnote at the bottom of the page accompanying Josephus’ comment (quoted above in regard to the Israelites’ 215-year stay in Egypt). Whiston wrote:

Why our Masoretic copy so groundlessly abridges this account in Exod. xii,40 as to ascribe 430 years to the sole peregrination [travel by foot—AB/BT/KB] of the Israelites in Egypt when it is clear even by that Masoretic chronology elsewhere, as well as from the express text itself, in the Samaritan, Septuagint, and Josephus, that they sojourned in Egypt but half that time—and that by consequence the other half of their peregrination was in the land of Canaan, before they came into Egypt—is hard to say (1974, 2:171).

Rohl suggested, however, that it really is not hard to say. In fact, he said:

It is fairly easy to see what happened in the interval between Josephus’ day and that of the Masoretes. During the process of copying down the original scrolls over the intervening centuries, a section of text something on the lines of “and in the land of Canaan” had fallen out (or had been edited out). This is confirmed by the Greek rendition of the Old Testament (the Septuagint or LXX) which retains the original, full version of the passage (1995, p. 331).

In his commentary on the Pentateuch, Adam Clarke discussed this at length:

...the Samaritan Pentateuch, by preserving the two passages, **they and their fathers and in the land of Canaan**, which are lost out of the present copies of the Hebrew text, has rescued this passage from all obscurity and contradiction. It may be necessary to observe that the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint has the same reading as that in the Samaritan. The Samaritan Pentateuch is allowed by many learned men to exhibit the most correct copy of the five books of Moses; and the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint must also be allowed to be one of the most authentic as well as most ancient copies of this version which we possess (n.d., pp. 358–359, emp. in orig.).

Rohl wrote in agreement:

The Septuagint was first written down in the time of Ptolemy I during the third century B.C. and the earliest surviving manuscript is again much older than the earliest surviving Masoretic copy. The Samaritan version of the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) is also considerably more ancient than the Masoretic scriptures and it too retains the longer rendition of the passage on the length of the Sojourn. Thus, three out of four sources for the book of Exodus state that the four-hundred-and-thirty-year interval represents the whole period from Abraham’s descent into Canaan all the way down to the Exodus of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt (1995, p. 331).

If Josephus, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint are correct (and there is good evidence to indicate that they are) in stating that “the sojourning of the children of Israel **and of their fathers**, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan AND in the land of Egypt was 430 years,” then the alleged contradiction between Exodus 12:40–41 and Galatians 3:17 evaporates into thin air, and the 215-year figure for the Israelites’ sojourn in Egypt can be accepted quite easily as both credible and scriptural.

But where do the “400 years” of Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 fit into this scheme? As God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 15 while the patriarch was dwelling among the terebinth trees at Hebron, the Lord said: “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**.” Here, God was permitting His faithful servant—through words spoken approximately two centuries **prior** to Israel’s entrance into Egypt—to peek into the future of his descendants. Add to that the words of Stephen (in Acts 7:6) when he said, looking back on Israel’s history: “And God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, **four hundred years**.” What is the meaning of these particular passages?

Some writers (e.g., Barnes, 1949a, p. 121; Boles, 1941, p. 104) have suggested that the 400-year figure represents merely a “rounding off” of the 430-year figure given in Genesis 15:13. But we think there is a much better explanation, and suggest that there is a **fundamental distinction** between the 430-year figure and the 400-year figure.



Notice that in Stephen's speech he specifically stated that Abraham's "seed" should sojourn in a strange land." In his book, *The Wonders of Bible Chronology*, Philip Mauro wrote:

But, in addition to this period of 430 years, there is another of 400 years, which also ended at the Exodus.... The period of 430 years includes the sojourn of Abram and Sarah. That of 400, however, begins with the experience of Abraham's "seed." This refers, of course, to Isaac in the first place; for in Isaac the promised "seed" was to be "called"; but the era is not that of the birth of Isaac, but that when he was acknowledged the "seed" and the "heir" by the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael. That took place at the time of the "great feast" which Abraham made the day Isaac was weaned (Gen. 21:8-10). This is an important event in the annals of God's people, because of its deep spiritual significance, as appears by the reference to it in Galatians 4:29,30.

From the foregoing Scriptures we are able to arrive at the date when Isaac was weaned and Ishmael was cast out (whereby Isaac became the acknowledged "seed" and "heir"). For there is a difference of thirty years between the two periods. But we have already found that there were twenty-five years from the call of Abraham (and God's "covenant" with him) to the birth of Isaac. Hence, deducting 25 from 30 gives us

5 years as the age of Isaac when Ishmael was cast out. There is no need to give at greater length the proofs concerning the 400-year period (n.d., pp. 27, 28, emp. in orig.).

As Hoehner wrote:

In conclusion, the 430 years went from Abraham's call to the Exodus. The first 215 years was their sojourn in Palestine and the last 215 years in Egypt. The 400 years was from the weaning of Isaac to the time of the Exodus (1969, 126:309).

Our point exactly!

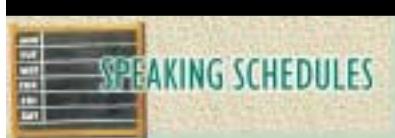
Some may ask, though, how the 215-year figure for the Israelites' time in Egypt can be squared with statements such as those in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, which seem to indicate that the Hebrews would be "sojourners in a strange land that is not theirs" where their enemies would "bring them into bondage" and "treat them ill"? In his commentary on Galatians, David Lipscomb addressed this point.

The law was given by Moses four hundred and thirty years after this promise was made to Abraham (Ex. 12:40). Many interpret this to mean that they sojourned in Egypt four hundred and thirty years. But they dwelt in tents and had no permanent habitation during their sojourn in Canaan and Egypt and in the wilderness from the call in Ur until the entrance into Canaan after the Egyptian bondage (n.d., p. 231, emp. added).

Or, as Mauro stated: "This period of 'sojourning' of the people of God is reckoned from Abraham's entrance into Canaan, for then they (Abram and Sarah, the beginnings of the family) became strangers and pilgrims (Heb. 11:8-13)" [n.d., p. 27, parenthetical item in orig.]. In Exodus 6:4, Canaan is referred to as "the land in which they dwelt as sojourners." While it certainly is true that they were slaves in Egypt for a considerable period of time (215 years), their oppression actually began much earlier, and lasted much longer, than just those 215 years. In fact, it would be accurate to say that the oppression began as early as Ishmael, who was half Egyptian and who mocked Isaac, the son of promise (Genesis 21:9). In Galatians 4:29, Paul discussed Ishmael's ill treatment of Isaac when he penned these words: "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." That "persecution" obviously continued, as is evident from the fact that Egyptians felt it was a great abomination to eat with Hebrews (Genesis 43:32)—even until the time that Joseph came to power in their country. Later, of course, the persecution culminated in the attempted destruction by Pharaoh of the Hebrew male babies during Moses' infancy (Exodus 1:15-22). Thus, the "sojourning" and "ill treatment" did not occur only during Egyptian captivity, but actually had commenced much earlier.

Critics of the 215-year view, however, have suggested that the second 215-year period (i.e., the time spent in Egypt) would not allow for the population explosion that obviously occurred while the Hebrews were captives. Less than 100 went down into Egypt, and yet by the time they left, they numbered more than 2 million (based on the figures in Numbers 1:46; cf. Archer, 1982, pp. 378-379). However, C.G. Ozanne, in his volume, *The First 7,000 Years*, has shed some light on this criticism.

Of course, the standard objection to this interpretation is the census totals of male Levites in Numbers 3. In this chapter the total number of Kohath's male descendants "from a month old and upward" is given as 8600 (v. 28), these being divided between his four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Assuming that the total number is to be divided evenly between the four sons, Amram must have had some 2150 male descendants within a few months of the Exodus. At first sight this figure



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may seem well-nigh impossible. When, however, it is broken down, it begins to assume more reasonable proportions. Thus, supposing that Amram was born fifty-five years after the descent into Egypt and that forty years constitute a generation, it is only necessary to allocate seven males to a family to arrive at a figure considerably in excess of the desired 2150. On this reckoning Moses would have had 7 brothers (for he himself may be ignored for the purposes of this calculation), 49 nephews, 343 great-nephews and 2401 great-great-nephews within the allotted span. A total of 2800 is thus obtained, of which the vast majority would still have been alive to see the exodus from Egypt. Bearing in mind the greatly extended period of childbearing (Jochebed was about 70 at the birth of Moses), the practice of polygamy (which enabled Jacob to have eleven sons in seven years), and above all the astonishing fertility of the Israelite women on which the Bible lays special emphasis (cf. Gen. 46.3; Exod. 1.7,12,19; Deut. 26.5), the rate of increase here suggested should not necessarily be thought incredible (1970, pp. 22-23).

Thus, when all of the biblical information is considered, it is apparent that there is no contradiction between Exodus 12:40-41 and Galatians 3:17. Nor is there any problem in regard to Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6. As the late Bobby Duncan said when he ended his study of these matters, "Isn't it amazing how the Bible clarifies the Bible?" (n.d., p. 4). Amazing indeed!—AB/BT/KB

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Q Did Noah have to take on board the ark creatures that lived their entire life cycles in water?

A Without a doubt, one of the most intriguing sections of Scripture is the account of the Genesis Flood, recorded in Genesis 6-8. Over the years, various questions have arisen in regard to the specific details of that account. For example, how did Noah get the animals to the ark? How could Noah have constructed a vessel large enough to carry all these creatures? How did he (and the seven people who accompanied him) care for them during a year-long trip? And so on.

One question that frequently arises has to do with whether Noah was required to take water-living creatures into the ark. Common sense alone would dictate that Noah was not required to do so, since such creatures already were accustomed to living in water. But the Bible provides the answer—which raises this issue above the level of mere "common sense."

Let us examine what the biblical text itself has to say on this subject. Genesis 6:19 reads: "And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female" (emp. added). The phrase "all flesh" has been interpreted on occasion to mean that God commanded Noah to take even water-living creatures on board the ark.

What is the meaning—in the context—of the phrase "all flesh"? The text that follows in Genesis 6:20 goes on to explain. "Of the birds after their kind, and of the cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive." God therefore limited "all flesh" by specifying three categories: (1) birds; (2) cattle; and (3) creeping things. In her book, *Science in the Bible*, Jean S. Morton presented an excellent treatise on how the Bible classifies animals, and the differences between biblical classification schemes and modern-day classification schemes. "Animals," she wrote, "are classified in Scripture according to simple characteristics that give quick recognition. For example, animals are classified as creeping, crawling, flying, and so forth" (1978, p. 154). Biblical commentator Adam Clarke noted that God's command to Noah in Genesis 6:19-20 was that "a male and female of all kinds of animals that could not live in the waters [were] to be brought into the ark" (n.d., 1:68). Furthermore, Genesis 7:21-22 records: "All flesh died that moved upon the earth, both birds, and cattle, and beasts, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was on the dry land, died" (emp. added).

The English word for birds (or fowl) is the translation of the Hebrew 'owph, which means flying creatures, fowl, or birds. Therefore, the first classification clearly is referring to those creatures that fly. Water-living creatures, by definition, would be omitted from this group.

The word "cattle" (King James/American Standard versions) is a generic term that can refer to domesticated (or wild) land animals or beasts. The Hebrew term (*behemah*) is used 188 times in the Old Testament. In the KJV, it is translated as beast 136 times and as cattle 52 times, depending on the specific context (Young, 1974). Neither of these two terms is descriptive of water-living creatures; therefore, water-living creatures clearly may be omitted from the second category as well.

The final classification, "creeping things" (Hebrew, *remes*), refers to reptiles, insects, and other small creatures (Strong, 1996). Davidson, in his *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, defined *remes* as "a reptile; that which moves on the earth; ...any land animal, in opposition to fowls" (1970, p. 685b). *Remes* is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. In



Genesis 9:3, it refers to the realm of living, moving creatures—in contrast to plants. In not a single instance in which the word *remes* is used is a specific creature described. T.C. Mitchell of the British Museum of Natural History noted that *remes* “is unlikely to correspond exactly to any modern scientific category, referring rather to all creatures which appear to the observer to move close to the ground” (1974, p. 274). *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* suggests that the word *remes* conveys the idea of anything that has the motion of creeping, crawling, etc. (Brown, et al., 1979, pp. 942b-943a). H.C. Leupold, in his *Exposition of Genesis*, defined *remes* as:

...from the root meaning “to move about lightly” or to “glide about.” “Creepers” almost covers the term, however, “creeping things” is too narrow, for it does not seem to allow for bigger creatures like reptiles. “Reptiles” again is too narrow, for it does not allow for the smaller types of life. Everything, therefore, large or small, that moves upon the earth or close to the earth, having but short legs, may be said to be included (1942, 1:83-84).

Remes, used in reference to land creatures, is different from the Hebrew *sherets*, which apparently includes a broader spectrum of creatures. In Leviticus 11:20, for example, *sherets* is used to describe certain animals. The word describes “teeming, swarming, creeping things” (see Harris, et al., 1980, 1:957). The word *remes* is used to describe the movement of those animals under the category of *sherets*. So, God said: “Let there be moving creatures [*sherets*],” and He created creatures that moved by creeping (*remes*). *Remes* (a noun) includes reptiles and most insects (*sherets*) because they *remes* (a verb). As it is employed in Genesis 6:20, the term *remes* clearly excludes water-living creatures.

Furthermore, the terms used in Genesis 6:20 must be interpreted in light of their use in previous verses. In Genesis 1:26, for example, the terms are used in contrast to other animal groups that specifically include fish: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish [*dagab*] of the sea, and over the birds [*'owph*] of the heavens, and over the cattle [*behemah*], and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing [*remes*] that creepeth upon the earth’” (emp. added). The same three terms are used in Genesis 6:7, where God pledged to destroy “man, and beast [*behemah*], and creeping things [*re-*

mes], and birds [*'owph*] of the heavens.” With the exception of man, the other three categories in Genesis 6:7 match those used in 6:20 where God told Noah which creatures were to be taken on board the Ark. God never pledged to destroy fish in the first place. Water-living creatures were not among the categories of living creatures that God told Noah to take into the ark.

The question sometimes is asked as to how fresh-water fish could survive in the salty seawater that covered the Earth during the Flood. Obviously, fresh-water deposits would have been contaminated with salt water as the flood waters covered “every high mountain over the whole earth” (Genesis 7:19-20). One of the problems here, of course, is that we cannot speak with certainty regarding the salinity of the oceans before the Flood. Nor do we know very much about the predecessors of many present-day fresh-water fish. Thus, any suggestion that fresh-water fish could not have survived in a post-Flood world assumes three things not in evidence: (1) that the salinity of the oceans and seas in Noah’s day was the same as the salinity of those today; (2) that fresh-water fish cannot live in diluted salt water; and (3) that the ability of water-living creatures in Noah’s day to survive in saline environments was the same as that of creatures found in today’s oceans and seas.

The first assumption—that the salinity of the oceans and seas of Noah’s day has remained constant—does not agree with the available scientific evidence. Based on a study of various factors of the past and present, some scientists believe that the salinity of the oceans may have been one-half of what they are currently (see, for example, Austin and Humphreys, 1990, 2:27, and Walter Lammerts as quoted in Whitcomb and Morris, 1961, p. 70). There is no reason that the fresh-water fish of Noah’s day could not have survived, provided the salinity of the waters was less than it is of today. Leonard Brand has noted: “[W]e would expect changes in the chemistry of seas and lakes—from mixing fresh and salt water.... Each species of aquatic organism would have its own physiological tolerance for these changes” (1997, p. 283). In addition, as Brand commented regarding the fresh/salt water mixture that would have ensued during and immediately after the Flood: “[T]he less dense fresh water may not mix quickly with the salt water and it stays on top long enough to provide a temporary refuge for fresh-water organisms. Perhaps, too,

many animals have a greater potential for adaptation to changing water conditions than we have recognized” (1997, p. 301-302).

The second assumption—that fresh-water fish cannot live in diluted salt water—is now known to be false, as Whitcomb and Morris point out as long ago as 1961 in their classic text, *The Genesis Flood* (p. 387, footnote).

The third assumption—that the ability of water-living creatures in Noah’s day to survive in saline environments was the same as that of creatures found in today’s oceans and seas—similarly is known to be incorrect. Many fresh-water fish have relatives that once lived in saline environments (see Batten and Sarfati, 2000). Furthermore, even today there are fish (e.g., large-mouth bass) that thrive in brackish waters such as those where the Mississippi River dumps its fresh water into the salt water of the Gulf of Mexico. Thus, in the end, the skeptics’ claim that Noah’s ark likely included giant fish tanks is wrong. JD/BT

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

A PERSONAL NOTE—IN HONOR OF A FALLEN MENTOR

In my “Note from the Editor” in the December 1999 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, I wrote an article titled “On the Death of a Mentor,” in which I lamented the passing of Bobby Duncan, minister of the church of Christ in Adamsville, Alabama. During his lifetime, Bobby had indeed been a very special mentor to me (and, I might add, to several more young men as well). In my comments about Bobby, I mentioned that there had been other men who had exerted a similar positive impact on my life. Included in that list were my late father, Dr. Charles A. Thompson, and Dr. Russell C. Artist. Not long ago, Dr. Artist passed away at the ripe old age of 89. During the months since, I have spent some time collecting information so that I could pay tribute to him in the pages of *Reason & Revelation*—which is exactly what I want to do in this month’s “Note from the Editor.”

Russell Charles Artist was born on January 5, 1911 in Francesville, Indiana, as the second son of Frances and Nellie Artist. Early on, he excelled in public speaking, and developed an interest in the German language (two talents that, unbeknownst to him, would serve him well later in life). In 1932, he graduated from Butler University with a baccalaureate degree in biology. That fall, he entered graduate school at Northwestern University in Indiana to work on his M.S. in paleoecology, which he completed in 1934. In September of that year, he was accepted into the doctoral program at the University of Minnesota, and completed his Ph.D. in botany in 1938. That same year, he accepted a teaching position at Amarillo College in the Texas panhandle (ironically, just 70 miles from my home town of Dalhart!). It was there that he met Alice Blanche Cathey, whom he married at Christmas time in 1939. In 1942, a daughter, Merrill (pronounced “mer-il-lee”), was born. In 1944, a son was born, but died at the tender age of only six weeks old. In 1945, Russell and Cathey (Alice Blanche’s nickname) moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, where he began teaching at Westminster College. It was while he was there, and attending a worship service at the local church of Christ at the insistence of his wife, that he met the well-known

missionary, Otis Gatewood. The Gatewoods also had lost an infant son, which provided common ground for Otis and Russell. Dr. Artist obeyed the Gospel shortly thereafter, and in 1947 he moved his family back to Texas so he could teach biology at Abilene Christian College (now a university). But, by 1948, the Artists were on their way to do mission work in the two countries of Switzerland and Germany, where they established congregations of the churches of Christ. They worked with local orphanages, and assisted in the adoption of 19 children. He and Cathey adopted their own son, Tim, there as well—an event that always

was a great source of joy for him.

In 1953, Dr. Artist joined the faculty of David Lipscomb College (now a university), where he taught for 23 years (13 as head of the biology department). During his younger years, as he ruefully admitted to me in a conversation between mentor and student, he had been a “dyed-in-the-wool” evolutionist. After his conversion, however, he was an indefatigable creationist who even authored a creation-centered biology text for his classes at Lipscomb. [He also was a major contributor to the respected creationist biology textbook, *Biology: A Search for Order in Complexity*, first published in 1970.] For over four decades, he traveled around the country, and around the world, speaking out against evolution and defending the biblical doctrine of creation. He deeply regretted every wasted moment he had spent as an evolutionist, and devoted the rest of his life to turning people (especially young people) away from that atheistic world view.

Cathey died of cancer in 1963; Russell retired from teaching in 1976, having married Dora Smith in 1966. Dora passed away in 1996, and four years later, on December 24, 2000, Dr. Artist went to his heavenly reward as well. I spent almost twenty-five years at his side, during which he was untiring in his encouragement and unrelenting in his constructive criticism. He wanted me, he explained, to be “the very best.” That, of course, was impossible. For, you see, that designation belonged solely to him.

Bert Thompson